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ABSTRACT

Young people with records of involvement in the juvenile justice system were studied in Florida, primarily in the inner city of Tampa. The study is part of a longitudinal study of predictors of drug use, delinquency, and criminality. Overall, 32 percent of the 297 adolescents interviewed reported engaging in drug sales in the year preceding their initial interviews, and 35 percent sold drugs 1 or more times in the follow-up period. Only 13 percent lived with both biological parents, and most came from families of low to moderate social status. The following common findings indicative of at-risk status were physical abuse and sexual abuse, drug use, and other delinquent behaviors. The sample demonstrated high levels of behaviors and attitudes considered indicators of school problems and poor experiences of education. Case studies of three adolescents for whom the outlook is relatively positive and three for whom the prospects are negative provide insight into the conditions that predispose these youngsters to risk. Policies are suggested for the improvement of schools and the education of teachers to help combat the conditions that put youth at risk. Community supports and resources that can be mobilized for the effort are explored. Improved educational experiences and educational environments are vital for disadvantaged youth. (Contains 43 references.) (SLD)

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Troubled Lifestyles: High-Risk Youth in Florida

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TROUBLED LIFESTYLES: HIGH-RISK YOUTH IN FLORIDA[1]

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Introduction

"Went to Dorothy Thomas School for being bad at regular school." (Youth attending an educational center for severely emotionally disturbed children)

The following discussion is based on an intensive study of young people who have a record of involvement in the juvenile justice system. As such, they are not just at grave risk in terms of possible long-term future criminality. They are also the kind of youngsters likely to be disruptive in the school system, to be arrested and processed through the justice system, and to have their education disrupted.

The emerging picture might lead to the view that these are hopeless cases, too expensive in time and money to do anything about in the educational system. Certainly much of what we have to say demonstrates the major task facing anyone trying to help these youngsters. But, at the same time, there is evidence that many of these young people may begin to sort out their lives and emerge from their problem life-styles to join the adult community with the potential

to contribute, in their way, to society. It is extremely important to understand that these young people are not to be dismissed as "bad." The family and community stress which contributes to their difficulties cannot be ignored as irrelevant. As we will see, the problems of the children are often the consequence of substance abuse and mental health problems of their family and community.

Many studies document the influence of alcohol and other substance misuse on educational failure. Furthermore, studies show the interplay between delinquency and the educational system. Young people who perform badly in school and who show a lack of commitment to education are among the most likely to engage in antisocial activities (Elliott et al., 1979; Elliott, Huizinga and Ageton, 1985; Hirschi, 1969; and Newcomb and Bentler, 1988). This is true of both youngsters whom the criminal justice system has officially processed as delinquents and those in the general population whom the system has not detected.

Previous research has consistently shown the following to be among the factors associated with alcohol and other drug use as well as delinquent behavior:

(1) Low scholastic aptitude as measured by tests (Gottfredson, 1987; Hawkins et al., 1988; Hawkins and Lishner, 1987).

(2) Poor school grades (Bachman et al., 1978; Brook et

al., 1989; Gottfredson, 1987; Hawkins and Lishner, 1987; Hawkins et al., 1988; Zarek, Hawkins and Rogers, 1987).

(3) Being in the same school grade for more than one year (Gottfredson, 1988; Spivack and Rapsher, 1979).

(4) Involvement with a special or remedial education program (Berrueta-Clement et al., 1984; Gottfredson, 1987; Hawkins, 1989; Hawkins and Lishner, 1987; Zarek et al., 1987).

(5) Poor school attendance (Gottfredson et al., 1983; Robins and Hill, 1966; Zarek, Hawkins and Rogers, 1987).

(6) Dropping out of school early (Hawkins and Lishner, 1987; Kandel, 1975).

Young people who show any one of the above problems are much more likely to experience the other difficulties (Jessor and Jessor, 1977). These educational problems are cumulative over time (Lazar et al., 1982) so that each of the problems should be taken as a grave warning sign.

Of course, educational problems are not independent of other significant features of young people's lives. For example, environmental circumstances influence their learning and behavior. Young people from inner-city areas are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system and considerably at risk educationally. Because they arrive poorly prepared for classroom instruction they often fail at school; their parents are often indifferent to education;

they often have learning disabilities, physical handicaps, or emotional problems; and they experience racial prejudice (Research and Policy Committee of the Committee for Economic Development, 1987). Equally, the school system may further victimize them: inner-city schools are frequently of substandard quality and have high teacher turnover, low morale and high levels of classroom disorder (Gottfredson, 1988; Research and Policy Committee of the Committee for Economic Development, 1987).

Despite such a wealth of well-established knowledge, the family and community contexts in which high-risk youths live are frequently ignored. These are often stressful environments, which present obstacles to the youngsters' development in crucial ways. Adults seeking to educate disadvantaged young people must understand their social biographies. This is necessary in order to provide the education experiences and support they need to make a commitment to education. Ultimately their future as members of conventional society is at stake. This cannot be overemphasized (Sampson, 1990:18).

Site Studied

The research discussed here is part of a longitudinal study of the predictors of likely future drug use, delinquency, and criminality. Fieldwork was carried out

between December 1986 and April 1987 for the initial phase of the research. In the follow-up interview phase, each participant was interviewed within four months of the anniversary of his/her initial interview.[2]

All the youngsters, when first contacted, were housed in a detention center. Youngsters from inner-city areas, such as Tampa's housing projects, were overrepresented in the study. During the time of the first and second series of interviews, the "crack" cocaine "epidemic" hit the city. Youth involvement in "crack" distribution became an attractive activity, particularly for the black youngsters.

> An often overlooked cornerstone of hard drug use among urban Black males is that it is not only, and perhaps not primarily a consumption and/or recreational behavior. It also serves economic functions of occupation and career for this group...in a population subgroup where employment opportunities are severely constrained, and at a life stage when economic independence is expected and required, the drug economy is one of the relatively few options available (Brunswick 1988:168).

Overall, 32 percent of the 297 youngsters reported engaging in drug sales during the year preceding their initial interviews, and 35 percent said that they sold drugs one or more times during the follow-up period. White and

black youngsters differed in terms of the types of drugs sold. Marijuana was more typical of white youths, while black youths were more frequently involved with cocaine. There were few organized gangs in Tampa during the first two years of our project, so youngsters involved in drug sales tended to be individual or small group entrepreneurs.

Of course, participation in drug sales carries with it a series of risks such as arrest, and in the case of white youths, personal cocaine use. Perhaps more important in the present context is that the profits earned from drug sales were an important factor in dropping out of school. By leaving school, many youths foreclosed their future occupational opportunities as a consequence of becoming increasingly involved in the violent and other criminal activities that are part and parcel of this life style. Hence, dependence on the material gains from drug sales (particularly crack cocaine) together with the use of these funds to purchase luxury cars and expensive jewelry created a material trap, which was itself very "addictive."

Given the nature of the study, the locations at which data were gathered were rather different. All the participants in the initial research interview were seen at the regional detention center in Tampa. Participation was voluntary and protected from subpoena or use in any civil or court proceedings. Virtually all of the interviews took

place within 48 hours of admission. Each detainee received a nominal fee. In addition, each
provided a urine sample to examine for drug residues. Excluded from the study were detainees who had come to the center from another secure unit rather than from the community. It should be noted that refusals were extremely rare. We believe the arrangements for confidentiality and the young people's belief that this was a socially worthwhile project led to the 98 percent rate of cooperation. All girls entering the detention center were included in the sample together with a random sample of half of the males.

The locations of the follow-up sessions were much more varied. The youths were interviewed in the community (55 percent), in a detention center following arrest or admission by court order (14 percent), in a county jail (8 percent), while resident in a detention center or juvenile commitment program (12 percent), in a Department of Corrections facility (10 percent), and in a psychiatric facility, general hospital or children's home (2 percent).

Demographic Characteristics

The catchment area for the detention center used in the study was Hillsborough County, on the west coast of Florida. However, the vast majority of youths live in the Tampa urban

area. Tampa has a population of 285,000, on the basis of a 1988 estimate, which represents an increase of 5 percent over its 1980 figure. The ethnic breakdown is 73.9 percent white, 23.5 percent black, 0.3 percent native American Indian, 0.7 percent Asian American and 1.7 percent other. Thirteen percent are of Hispanic origin (Census Bureau data for 1980). Most of the youths in the study were male (77 percent) and Anglo-American (50 percent). Forty-two percent of the detainees were black, compared to only 19 percent in the 10 to 17-year-olds in the area. The average age at the time of first interview for our sample was 15 years.

Families and Community Ties

At first interview, only 13 percent of the youngsters lived with both biological parents, and 54 percent resided either with their mother alone or their mother and other relatives. A minority (25 percent) reported they had lived continuously with both their biological parents during the first twelve years of life. The youngsters typically came from families of low to moderate social status. As few as 8 percent of the heads of households held an executive, administrative/managerial or professional job. Thirty percent had unskilled, semi-skilled or low-to-moderate skilled service occupations. Twenty-one percent of the households received public assistance or other means of

public support.

The youngsters' families had experienced a number of difficulties. Forty-five percent had at least one member of their family or household, besides themselves, with an alcohol abuse problem; 28 percent with another drug abuse problem (most frequently marijuana or cocaine); and 25 percent with a mental health problem. Contact with the criminal justice system was common among the families. Over 71 percent of the youths claimed at least one other member of their family or household family had been arrested. From 52 to 65 percent reported that a family or household member had been in jail or detention, adjudicated as delinquent, convicted of a crime, or put on juvenile probation. As many as 30 percent of the families or households had at least one member who had been sent to training school or prison.

Friends provided little respite from family stress for these youngsters. Almost 60 percent claimed that at least one close friend had used marijuana-related drugs and 25 percent, cocaine in the past year. Contact with the criminal justice system was also extremely common. Seventy-seven percent had one or more close friends who had been arrested and 57 to 68 percent had one or more close friends who had been held in jail or detention, adjudicated to be delinquent or convicted of a crime, or had been put on probation. In addition, 27 percent had a close friend or

friends who had been sent to a state training school (secure commitment program for delinquent youths) or prison.

Kinds of At-Risk Students

In terms of substantial problems, all of the young people in this study were clearly at future risk by the fact of their placement in the detention center. Indeed, many of the youths had extensive contact with the juvenile court by the time of their first interview. Sixty-nine percent had been referred to juvenile court at least once for a felony property offense and 26 percent for felony violence offenses. Almost a third of the detainees had been referred to the authorities at least once for neglect (32 percent) or physical abuse (27 percent).

Given the stressed family circumstances in which the youths grew up, it is not surprising that neglect and abuse were common. At their initial interviews, youngsters provided extensive personal information on this painful aspect of their lives.

Physical Abuse

The study adapted a number of well-established items measuring various aspects of physical abuse from the child abuse literature (Gelles, 1979; Straus, 1979 and 1983; Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz, 1980). Abuse includes various

types of assault by an adult (someone over the age of 18 years) and concerned events prior to the first interview. Many of the youngsters reported such physical abuse by an adult: forty-four percent beaten or really hurt; 54 percent beaten or hit with a whip, strap or belt; 22 percent of the beaten or hit with something "hard" (like a club or stick); 10 percent attached with a weapon; 17 percent hurt badly enough to need medical attention; and 6 percent hospitalized by the abuse. Often there were repeated experiences of abuse and as many as 26 percent of the youths claimed three or more physical abuse experiences. Such self-reports agreed well with official agency records.

However, the interpretation of the large-scale abuse of the young people in our sample needs to be set against the experiences of general population. The 1985 national survey on family violence (Straus and Gelles, 1986) showed prevalence rates for being hit with something (9.7 percent), beaten-up (0.6 percent), threatened with a knife or gun (0.2 percent), or using a knife or gun (0.2 percent)--fractions of what out sample experienced.

Sexual Abuse

The definition of sexual abuse is difficult (Howitt, 1991). Based on Finkelhor's (1979) measures, youths were classified as having been sexually victimized if any of the

following experiences had happened to them: (1) A sexual experience at 13 years or younger with an adult (18-year-old and older stranger, friend, or family member), or (2) a sexual experience at any age in which force or threat was used or if they experienced fear or shock or if this experience was with a parent or step-parent. In line with this definition, a consenting act between, for example, a 14 to 17-year-old youngster and a nonparent adult was not classified as sexual abuse.

Overall, 33 percent (65 percent of females and 24 percent of males) had been sexually victimized according to this definition. These high sexual victimization rates may be conservative estimates of this experience (cf. Mouzakitis, 1981). Although a sensitive introduction preceded our sexual experience questions, some youths may have been reluctant to talk about such emotive matters.

Community Life and Activities

The Use of Drugs

One of the characteristics of our sample was the high frequency with which the youths engaged in alcohol and drugs use and delinquent behavior. A number of questions on drug use were taken from the national survey on drug abuse (National Institute on Drug Abuse [NIDA], 1985). These helped determine the (non-medical) use of eleven drug types:

(1) tobacco, (2) alcohol, (3) marijuana, (4) inhalants, (5) hallucinogens, (6) cocaine, (7) heroin, (8) barbiturates and other sedatives, (9) tranquilizers, (10) stimulants, and (11) analgesics. Analysis of the alcohol use data concentrated on the number of day's use of alcohol in the 30 days prior to initial interview. The present sample could thereby be compared to general population data from a 1985 survey of 12-17 year olds (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1986). Our sample had much higher levels of alcohol use than this. For example, 83 percent of our youths claimed they had used alcohol one or more times ever compared to 57 percent of the NIDA survey; 64 percent of our sample had used alcohol during the preceding 30 days compared to 32 percent of the NIDA survey.

At reinterview, much the same pattern applied. Allowance was made for the fact that some youths were incarcerated at the time; they were questioned about the period prior to reincarceration. Alcohol use since the first interview was the point of focus for this substance. Most youths continued to use alcohol during the follow-up period. For example, 60 percent used alcohol at least once. High rates of illicit drug use were reported.

At the initial interview, 26 percent claimed to have used marijuana-related drugs 100 or more times in their lives; and 20 percent, cocaine on 11 or more occasions.

These rates are much higher than those reported by 12-17-year-old youths in the 1985 national household survey on drug abuse (National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1986). Using identical drug use questions to ours, the NIDA survey found the following prevalence rates for the nine illicit drug categories. The national rates are given in parentheses:

Marijuana 71 percent (24 percent)
Inhalants 25 percent (9 percent)
Hallucinogens 20 percent (3 percent)
Cocaine 37 percent (5 percent)
Heroin 3 percent (0.5 percent)
Sedatives 13 percent (4 percent)
Tranquilizers 16 percent (5 percent)
Stimulants 22 percent (6 percent)
Analgesic 15 percent (6 percent)

Multiple illicit drugs use was common. For example, 17 percent claimed the use of drugs in three or more categories six or more times in their lives.

The youths in our sample continued to report relatively high frequencies of drug use at reinterview. Nineteen percent had used marijuana related drugs and 11 percent cocaine at least 100 times since their initial interview.

Other Delinquent Behavior

Delinquent behavior in the year prior to initial

interview was examined using measures from the work of Elliott et al. (1983). In addition, data on delinquent behavior during the follow-up period was collected. The following summated indices of delinquency are annual prevalence rates prior to the initial research interview:

(1) General Theft: stole something, stole motor vehicle, broke into a building or vehicle, went joyriding: 80 percent prevalence.

(2) Crimes Against Persons: aggravated assault, gang fights, hit a teacher, parent, or a student, sexual assault, strong-armed someone: 78 percent prevalence.

(3) Index Offenses: aggravated assault, sexual assault, gang fights, stole a motor vehicle, stole something worth more than $50, strong-armed someone: 73 percent prevalence.

(4) Total Delinquency: the sum of the reported frequency of 23 delinquent activities: 95 percent prevalence.

In addition, a further index was developed:

(5) Drug Sales: sold marijuana, cocaine or crack, or other hard drugs such as heroin or LSD: 32 percent prevalence.

As many as between 3 and 28 percent of the sample claimed to have engaged in some of these categories of offenses 100 times or more--some reporting many hundreds of offenses. Clearly self-reported delinquency was high at this stage.

Although at a lower level during the year prior to the second interview, prevalence rates continued to be high: general theft (60 percent), crimes against persons (57 percent), index offenses (54 percent), total delinquency (84 percent) and drug sales (35 percent). Furthermore, between 5 and 26 percent claimed to have engaged in the offenses represented by the various scales at least a hundred times since their initial interview. Again, some of the youngsters reported many hundreds of delinquent acts.

Perceptions of School

A variety of official record and self-reported educational information provides insight into the youngsters' attitudes towards, experiences of, and perceptions of school. It is important to bear in mind that our sample is an extreme and "selected" one. As a whole, the sample demonstrates high levels of the characteristics which have been shown to be indicators of school problems and poor experiences of education. Although we would expect high levels of school problems in our delinquent sample, it does not necessarily follow that the relationship between school problems and levels of delinquency should be particularly close given the nature of the sample. This is because the youths in our sample are at the tail ends of skewed distributions of delinquency (including drug use) and

educational performance/activities.

The following measures were employed:

(1) Ever been expelled or suspended from school.

(2) Ever repeated a grade.

(3) Ever been placed in a special education program.

(4) Total scores on a standard achievement test probing performance in reading, language and mathematics (The Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills[CTB/McGraw-Hill, 1982]).

(5) Academic grade point average.

(6) The number of consecutive years not attending school preceding the follow-up year.

For the reasons noted above, the various measures of educational experiences were not significantly related to the extent of alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine use nor to the extent of self-reported delinquency. For this extreme group, the relationships among these factors are not systematic and do not follow the patterns reflected in the general population.

Much more salient are the sample youth's poor educational performance in, as well as weak commitment to, school. The youngsters' school grade levels lagged two years behind what would be expected based on age at the time of their initial interview. Moreover, their Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills scores were two years behind their actual grade level!

The youths' educational histories through to the Spring of 1990 (by which time all but 4 percent of them had left school) tell an important story which should inform policymakers wishing to redirect the lives of high risk youths in socially constructive directions. A key theme emerging from the data is that these youngsters disconnect from school at a critical time for their social, health, and moral development or never properly connect. The long history of their difficulties at school is illustrated by other aspects of the data:

(1) On average, the youngsters changed schools almost seven different times--considerably more often than the three or four schools most youths attend during high school. Forty-six percent of the youths had been held back two or more times; and 46 percent were held back in grades 1 to 3.

(2) Thirty-five percent of the youths stopped going to school prior to their sixteenth birthday. As many as 72 percent ended school in or before ninth grade. Not surprisingly, given this catalog of educational failure, only 10 percent of the youths graduated high school or obtained a General Education Diploma.

(3) A majority of the youths had been in a special program for the educationally handicapped and had a D- grade average for the academic year prior to their initial interview. During the next year (when 52 percent were in

school for at least one grade period) and the succeeding year (when only 22 percent were in school for one or more grade periods) little improvement was shown in academic achievement. Grade averages were 0.67 and 0.90 for these years, respectively. These data document that the youngsters were continuing to experience considerable problems in progressing through school.

(4) Not unexpectedly, given their difficulties, the youngsters displayed a progressively deteriorating attendance record. This was true when appropriate allowance was made for the age of the youths at the time of interview, since some of them were past the youngest official school-leaving age.

Our data revealed youngsters (1) deeply disaffiliated from school at first interview and (2) increasingly alienated from school over time. Our results, together with conversations with school personnel, indicate that personal and family difficulties and an overburdened and low resource educational system account for the dismal situation. Although the youngsters displayed difficulties in school at an early age, school officials did not have the resources to work with these youngsters and their families in the intensive, prolonged fashion which could improve the youths' educational prospects. Consistent absentees from school rarely became reintegrated into the system. Absenteeism was

the major reason why the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills was available for just 51 percent of the sample.

School-Community Life and Linkages

Case Studies

Some social biographies will be presented to bring the statistics to life. Obviously it is difficult to find typical cases, but these examples reveal some of the complexity of youngsters' life styles and search for meaning in "ecologically structured norms" (Sampson 1990:20). The youths seek appropriate standards and expectations of conduct within the limited framework provided by their communities, family, networks of peers, and personal histories. This framework serves to reinforce a growing alienation from mainstream society.

Some youngsters in our sample achieve a more positive adjustment to life and largely abandon the alienating and destructive patterns which lead to problems in education and the wider community. While some of this might appear to be rudimentary adjustment, there is an important lesson to be drawn out. That is of the futility of labeling these youngsters as doomed to failure on the basis of the problems they face by virtue of their background, their family experiences, their educationally poor careers, and their delinquency in many forms. What they often need is help not

further rejection by the educational system; rather they need assistance to be constructively involved in school at an early age. The following case studies illustrate something of the gamut of positive and negative adjustments.

Positive Adjustment

The two boys and a girl described in this section reflect what the interviewers regarded as "positive adjustment." This may appear to be a generous claim but matters have to be judged relatively.

RICHARD

Richard is 16 years old and currently lives at home with his father, stepmother, two sisters, and three younger stepsisters. His older brother lives away from home. Richard, the middle child of seven, is in the 10th grade of high school and works for a tile marketing company. His father works as a chef, and his stepmother attends school. The family has lived in Tampa most of Richard's life and appear to be closely-knit. His natural mother, however, had a severe chemical dependency problem which resulted in her children being removed from her. Consequently, Richard's primary care-giver was his father. For a brief period following his parents' divorce, Richard was in therapy, since he found the break-up difficult. A stress-related loss of hair has resulted in his being under a

dermatologist's care.

Richard first came to the attention of the authorities in 1986 and has a long list of charges. These include assault, trespassing, burglary, grand larceny, criminal mischief, and aggravated battery. He has been through arbitration, detention centers, and juvenile probation. Since this time, however, he has not picked up any new charges though he has failed to carry out the requirements of his probation. His counselor is concerned that Richard has been misleading his father on this matter.

At the first interview, Richard's self-reported delinquency included theft, carrying a concealed weapon, and fighting with peers. However, at the second interview he only reported fighting with peers, but this led to suspension from school rather than legal charges. He has successfully stayed away from delinquency for a year and is working consistently and attending school. He uses alcohol only occasionally, and his urine drug tests were both negative. His psychological tests showed no signs of significant pathology at any stage. Richard had a good self-concept but wanted more self-respect at the first interview--and by the second interview was expressing a highly positive self-concept.

It is noteworthy that the educational system chose to exclude Richard as part of his punishment for fighting.

Whether such actions would in general be in the best interests of youngsters in extreme risk need further exploration.

MIKE

Mike is an eleven-year-old male. When reinterviewed, he was living in a children's home, anxiously awaiting the adoption which never materialized. He had no recollection of his natural mother nor has he ever seen his biological father. By the age of five months, he had become known to the Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services. Over the next six years he was referred five times for physical abuse, neglect, and the like. At ten years of age he was in the detention center for criminal mischief.

He had overall a positive self-concept. Perhaps due to his age, there was some inconsistency in his answers to this measure. Certainly by the time of reinterview, his responses were consistently positive. Self-reported delinquency was low, except that he claimed to have threatened to hit other students on a daily basis. He had begun to smoke cigarettes at the age of six, tried marijuana, and used alcohol within the last year at initial interview. Follow-up data revealed a continuation of the same behaviors at much the same sort of level. His urine sample on both occasions was negative. Mike indicated that

he wanted to "straighten up his life," and hoped that his maternal grandmother, whom he had not seen since he was three, would come to take him away from the home.

While in many ways a sad case, it is noteworthy that Mike seems to have emerged out of a long-term troubled life and its associated delinquent phase. It would appear that Mike is more troublesome at school because of fighting with other students--which serves as a reminder that problem behavior may be centered on the school alone.

VIVIAN

Vivian is a 17-year-old girl who was living with her parents at the time of her reinterview. Although she had completed the 8th grade, by the time of the follow-up interview she had dropped out of school. Her official record began when she was 11 years of age when her father was investigated for physically abusing her. Prior to her initial interview, all but one of her ten referrals had been for various forms of abuse including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, threatened with harm, and being neglected. She told us that she was sexually victimized by her father when she was 13 years of age. Furthermore, she also reported many occasions of physical abuse since she was eight.

Vivian used alcohol on 15 of the 30 days prior to her first interview. She got drunk or very high on alcohol

several times a month and claimed that she had used marijuana products between 11 and 49 times in her life. Her urine tested negative for all drugs detectable. She claimed she did not use drugs other than marijuana. Vivian used alcohol less during the follow-up period. She claimed to have taken it just one day in the thirty days immediately prior to the second-wave interview, and to have got high or drunk on alcohol only every other month. Vivian had used marijuana between six and ten times during the period between interviews but again had not used other drugs. Her urine tested negative for drugs once more.

Violence against other students was a feature of her life prior to her first interview with us. She reported hitting or threatening to hit other students more than 140 times in the previous year. However, at reinterview, she only reported being rowdy in public places just two times during the follow-up period. She reported no other delinquency.

At the initial interview, Vivian revealed that she had difficulties in the areas of perceived bodily dysfunction, depression, hostility, and phobic anxiety (fear of people, places, objects or situations leading to avoidance or escape behavior). Even at the follow-up interview she had difficulties of obsessive-compulsiveness, depression, anxiety, hostility, phobic anxiety, and paranoid ideation.

Throughout the interviews, she expressed low self-esteem in a number of areas.

One of her most significant life events was the birth of her son. She regularly has contact with his father as part of a long-term relationship. Vivian indicated she enjoyed being with her son, and she spends a great deal of time taking care of him. This commitment occasionally causes her to become somewhat depressed.

Vivian's lifestyle and its positive characteristics illustrate someone can carve out a social niche in ways which would not seem ideal in conventional terms. Much of her fulfillment comes from single-parenthood early in life.

Negative Adjustment

Interviewers judge the next three case studies to illustrate poor adjustment following being taken in to detention center.

BRENDA

At eighteen years of age, when not living on the streets, Brenda lives with her mother, older sister and younger brother in a low-income apartment complex. She had not seen her father for six years. At one time, she visited her father in another state but was very disappointed by how he received her. It seemed that her life took a turn for the worse after what she saw as her father's rejection. Her

mother works as a snack-bar cashier in a downtown area. Brenda spent most of her early childhood in government-subsidized housing projects in Tampa.

Her contact with the authorities began when she was ten years when she was referred to juvenile court for shoplifting. Six years later she faced prostitution charges and had been released from county jail on such a charge immediately prior to her interview.

By the time of her initial interview, she had used cocaine frequently and marijuana occasionally. Nevertheless, her urine tests were negative for these drugs. However, by the time of her second interview, she had increased her cocaine use dramatically. Now her urine tested positively for the drug. Furthermore, she had become involved in cocaine dealing though she prostituted herself to finance her cocaine addiction. Her physical health deteriorated to a dangerous level.

Not surprisingly, her education suffered. Brenda dropped out of school after her ninth grade even though she was an excellent student. By the time of her follow-up interview, she reported frequently carrying a concealed weapon. Although she had a positive self-concept at the time of both interviews, her scores on the emotional/ psychological problem checklist increased over time.

Brenda was referred to a drug treatment program but

broke an important rule and had to leave it after two weeks. Despite this, her health improved, and she became increasingly optimistic about her chances to improve her condition. However, she had a short-lived cohabiting relationship with a graduate of the drug-treatment program and finally returned to Tampa's streets as a prostitute.

A failure in most conventional terms, Brenda demonstrates a history through which an educationally able person's experiences and actions lead to her disengagement from schooling at a vital time.

MARSHA

Although Marsha, a 15-year-old, sees her mother periodically, she had no contact with her father for ten years. She was staying at the home of her grandfather, a maintenance worker, at the time of the first interview. A year or so later she was working as a departmental sales girl and also engaged in prostitution. Marsha had attended eighth grade and still plans to finish high school one day. She said she was achieving better than average grades when in school.

In 1981, a court ordered counseling, and the records show that at the age of nine, Marsha was unsupervised. A year later there was a further but unfounded report that she was unsupervised. In 1985, after there were indications of abuse, Marsha began to engage in delinquent behavior. A

year later she was put in a community (diversion) program following informal judicial handling (arbitration) for her arrest on a property misdemeanor offense. The same year she ran away from home and was placed on juvenile probation, which she violated by running away again. In 1987, Marsha switched between prostitution and running away. The last runaway charge listed on the official record showed that Martha was picked up in California, where she has been living with a male friend, and brought back to Tampa.

At her first interview, Marsha reported that her delinquent behavior involved stealing, attacking someone with the intention to seriously hurt or kill, being paid for having sexual relations, selling marijuana and cocaine, hitting or threatening to hit a parent and students, disorderly conduct, and taking a vehicle for a ride without its owner's permission. During the period until the follow-up interview, she had sexual relations with someone for money, sold marijuana and cocaine, hit or threatened to hit a teacher, parents and students, and engaged in disorderly conduct.

Marsha reported substance use though her urine tests were both negative. When we first interviewed her, she occasionally drank alcoholic beverages, took tranquilizers and stimulants (Black Beauty), and regularly smoked marijuana as well as cocaine, usually in the form of crack.

This pattern was repeated substantially during the follow-up period when she reported occasional alcohol and marijuana consumption together with virtually daily use of cocaine (typically as crack).

During both interviews, Marsha expressed a desire to have more self-respect, and indicated she felt useless, no good at all at times, and, on the whole, was dissatisfied with herself. At the initial interview, she indicated feelings of failure and having nothing to be proud of. Things had changed in certain respects by the time of the follow-up interview. She was more inclined to report feelings of pride and success and seemed to experience more normal levels of interpersonal sensitivity, phobic anxiety, and psychoticism. While these changes in someone involved in a basically illegal lifestyle, including prostitution as well as drugs, may seem a little odd to outsiders, they may reflect the comfort and security that her present lifestyle provided her with compared to her earlier family experiences.

When she was fourteen years of age, Marsha was beaten by an adult who was under the influence of alcohol. She also reported being raped. During the follow-up year, she was raped two more times by attackers under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Marsha had also been beaten-up by others though she did not seek any official help. She was twice

placed on a drug abuse treatment program. Marsha ran away from this to resume her lifestyle. Apparently she is, at some level, convinced that what she is doing is all right--after all, her mother was a prostitute for a number of years.

Marsha's case, like several of the others studied, demonstrates the extreme nature of neglect and abuse that contributes to their difficulties within the educational system. While it is debatable whether the education system could compensate for these family deficiencies without radical and costly initiatives, it is worthwhile noting that Marsha was able enough educationally and still retains a belief in formal learning as part of her future life career.

JAMES

Sixteen-year-old James was reinterviewed in Hillsborough County Jail. He had lived with his mother, a nurse, after his parents divorced early in his life. One older brother as well as several extended family members lived at home. James had been physically abused. Although the family received counseling, the abuse continued. Several years later, James's delinquency came to the attention of the authorities. He had attended school regularly and was a junior in high school when his mother reported increasing truancy. He earned a General Education Diploma while in the Dozier Training School for Boys. At

the time of his follow-up interview, his mother claimed to have no control over him.

Since 1983, James has been charged with a number of crimes ranging from theft, larceny, assault and battery, criminal mischief, to possession of cocaine. A number of public services have been involved with him, including arbitration, a diversion program, the detention center, juvenile probation, and the Dozier Training School. James has a severe crack cocaine addiction. Less significantly, James reports occasional alcohol use and also smokes cigarettes. His urine screens were positive at the times of both interviews. Although he was on a five-day residential drug treatment program in 1986, he continued to abuse cocaine on weekends. He spent $700 to $1,200 each week on this habit. To support his drug taking, James deals in drugs and is a runner for his dealer. While he states that he needs help, he refuses it on the grounds that he likes to be "high."

As measured by the emotional/psychological problem checklist, James showed no evidence of significant pathology on either occasion. He felt positive about himself at first interview even though he felt he was no good at times. However, by the time of the second interview, he had become much less satisfied with himself. James follows a typical pattern in our research: a person begins with a history of

physical abuse, moves to a pattern of delinquent behavior and, finally, becomes chemically dependent. James keeps a great deal of hostile and painful emotions inside himself.

James had opportunities for assistance. However, early counseling with his family and the drug treatment program may not have been as intensive or long-term as he needed. During the long period of time that James spent in the Dozier Training Center, there was a lack of any attempt at treatment. Upon release, he immediately returned to using cocaine.

This final case study demonstrates a failure of the support services. James's immediate problems are clearly associated with crack cocaine--and in particular financing this addiction. The system appears to have failed him particularly with respect to treatment for drug taking. While some might place the blame elsewhere and perhaps with James himself, to take such a view is to provide a ready excuse for neglecting other such youngsters in need (and at risk) in the education system.

School Community Linkages

> I need to talk to you one-to-one 'cause I have personal problems ... and maybe you or someone can help me to get a start on my life, 'cause I've tried and couldn't get nowhere ... Please don't use me only as an

important member of a special, confidential study (I NEED HELP!!!) in getting a start on my life!!!

This cry for help, from a youth participating in our research at a Florida Department of Corrections prison, points to the desperate need to assist such youngsters. Of course, the families of many of the youths present a formidable challenge to any educational institution. They move frequently within and outside of school districts; often experience financial and social or psychological difficulties; and are not always supportive of their children's development or receptive to working with educational personnel. Yet, early intervention with these youngsters has the potential to foster their growth in socially responsible ways. To continue to neglect to provide resources to schools for this task merely perpetuates educational failure and ensures that personal and social problems experienced by disadvantaged youngsters may pass down the generations. Social policies and programs which involve schools in crucial and prolonged ways are needed.

Our previous work (e.g., Dembo et al., 1986-87, 1988, 1990, in press) has demonstrated that:

(1) At an early age, neglectful or deficient supervision by parents, physical abuse, and sexual abuse are

common.

(2) Delinquency and drug use, once initiated, tended to be stable over time.

Furthermore, as we have seen, school difficulties were often first seen in the early years at school leading to a profound splintering from the educational system. There is a "cumulative deficit" problem among inner-city youths; they begin school with an academic handicap and readily lose ground over time (Lazar et al., 1982). Such an alienating experience moves many inner-city youths away from conventional society into delinquency and adult crime.

Ways to Lessen Student-School Alienation

Given what we know about our delinquent youngsters, we would agree with Gottfredson (1988) that the school system has several responsibilities. Lessening student alienation requires sizable resources, persistence, and the dedication of staff as part of a continuous program. Difficulties are likely to be compounded in the middle and secondary schools, since at this level no identifiable individual teacher has overall responsibility for any one student. Troubled youngsters often fall through such "gaps" in the system.

Improved linkages between schools and other community agencies would also help. A particularly disturbing finding in our follow-up interviews was that, among the youngsters

who reported that they had repeated a grade since their initial interview, 48 percent felt that they did not progress because of their placement in a detention center or incarceration. While this is not the direct fault of education alone, and says much about the juvenile justice system, it certainly highlights the need to help the youngsters' education to progress while in these circumstances. Unfortunately, because youngsters are particularly under stress at these times, they also need counseling and therapy at the detention center.

Interventions which occur early in a child's educational career, cover a prolonged period, involve their families, and seek to improve the quality of the environment of the school are likely to meet with some success (Research and Policy Committee of the Committee for Economic Development, 1987). Moreover, intervention is ultimately a more cost-effective way to address the needs of high risk youngsters and their families. When youngsters move into other institutions, such as the criminal justice system (cf. Sampson, 1990), the cost is greater.

Policies Needed

We would recommend consideration of the following as an alternative to what is typically the case:

(1) Teachers should be trained to identify high risk

youngsters at an early age. There is an extensive literature documenting the children's behavioral problems which are signs of current and future difficulties (cf. Dupont, 1989). Engaging in antisocial behavior, school failure, truancy, and absenteeism, which frequently first occur in the early school years, point to a child who is more likely to become increasingly problematic unless appropriate intervention is made.

(2) Troubled youngsters should be referred for evaluation to a specialized school team, consisting of an educational specialist and a case manager. A variety of services (academic, counseling, advocacy, and tutoring) would be provided; the difficulties of the youngsters' families should also be given attention and referrals made for needed care. In a school implementing the program at the required level of intensity, students receiving services of this sort engaged in less delinquency (Gottfredson, 1986). While this type of intervention program is costly, it is less expensive in the long run than the criminal justice expenses involved in responding to long-term delinquency and criminality.

(3) The quality of life in the schools that these high-risk youngsters attend needs to be improved.

> [schools] with clear, fair, firm rule enforcement--and schools with a climate that emphasizes and rewards good

> academic performance--are usually more orderly and appear to do a better job of restraining students from misconduct (Gottfredson 1987:49).

Inner-city schools are often under pressures which hinder their ability to carry out their educational mission. These include high teacher turnover, low morale, mistrust between faculty and administration, high levels of classroom disorder, and high rates of victimization (Gottfredson, 1987). Effort is needed to assist these schools to become appropriate environments to improve the educational performances of their disadvantaged students. Changes might involve provision of better instruction, classroom management, and disciplinary practices (see also Gottfredson, 1984; Gottfredson and Gottfredson, 1987).

(4) Serious consideration needs to be given to making schools, especially those serving high risk groups, multipurpose and year-round facilities. The problems of delinquent youths are multiple and overlapping--as are those of their families. One-problem-at-a-time approaches are unlikely to meet with success in these circumstances for obvious reasons. Social service agencies might consider the placement of units in community schools. Ideally, such an arrangement would facilitate inter-agency coordination and, simultaneously, permit more informed, consistent, and effective service delivery.

(5) There is a need for schools to network better with other agencies. As already indicated, of particular importance is the coordination of schools with organizations in the juvenile justice system. High risk youths who leave school periodically due to placement in a detention center or other secure facility need to be smoothly transitioned back into a community school and supported educationally during these periods.

Community Supports and Resources

It should be clear from the case studies we have reported that the youngsters in our sample frequently have slipped through the gaps in the community support system. Consequently, it is important to differentiate quite firmly between those youngsters who are currently marginal to the education system and demonstrate the signs of future legally troubled life-styles and those who have finally fallen deeply into trouble. The youngsters in our research are in the latter category. Obviously what needs to be done to prevent youngsters falling in trouble and what needs to be done for those already in trouble may well be radically different. The youngsters in our research clearly need to be helped to deal primarily with their crisis behaviors and given help to cope with the disruptive effects of being within the juvenile justice system on their education and

general social development. These youths may need greater support than is usually provided by communities.

Many of the problems these youngsters experience require highly specialized help. The involvement, for example, of drugs in the continued delinquent lifestyles of these young people cannot be tackled simply by the provision of general leisure and community resources for teenagers. Indeed, the nature of the cycle of illicit drug taking and selling in our society leads to obvious dangers in promoting non-specialized activities and community supports as a means of helping such youngsters, while neglecting to attempt to deal with the problems which have led to their detention in the first place.

Referral Agencies that Schools Can Work With

We have seen that the youngsters in our research frequently experienced physical and sexual abuse. Abuse significantly predicts psychological problems and delinquent behavior (e.g., Dembo et al., 1988, 1990, in press). Furthermore, continuing abuse predicts further delinquency. This is not simply a matter of intra-nuclear family abuse, but abuse by other persons. Consequently, attempts to reduce abuse may pay dividends in the reduction of later psychological and social problems. Care should be exercised not to assume that abuse and its effects could be eliminated

by simply removing the youngster from his/her home. The issues are complex. Nevertheless, child protective services have an important role and constitute a vital contact for schools.

The list of referral agencies could be extended to include liaison with specialized drugs programs which might effectively provide linkages with the school to permit youngsters a relatively easy direct access to help. Furthermore, such liaison might provide a valuable educational service to teachers and direct "advice and support lines" aided by close working relationships.

Ethics of Assistance to Youth Engaged in Illegal Activity

In our research, as already mentioned, we specifically obtained protection for the youngsters from legal risks associated with the information we collected. Not only did the confidentiality help ensure the cooperation of the participants in the research, but it kept us within acceptable standards of ethics in research. Furthermore, we did nothing which would reveal to the authorities the whereabouts of individuals being sought by agencies. It would seem to us, that there is a strong case for similar arrangements applying to any specialized educational worker trying to help youngsters at risk. Otherwise the dilemmas posed by legal and other requirements would put even help

for at risk youngsters at risk.

Concluding Comments

In summary, we hold the view that improved educational experiences and educational environments are vital for disadvantaged youths. This means moving beyond time-limited, one-shot educational interventions. High quality, holistic, intensive educational and related programs begun early, and addressing the needs of high risk youngsters while addressing the needs of their families, could reduce school misconduct, delinquent behavior, and improve learning and school completion. Bonding high-risk youngsters to conventional society has much to recommend it. The effects of such programs can be cumulative intergenerationally.

Viewed in the long term, these programs are cost effective and may help many of these youths assume socially responsible, rather than personally and socially harmful, patterns of behavior. Such programs require commitment to the view that education should serve all students who enter school, not only the well-mannered and motivated youngsters whom schools find it relatively easy to work with.

The current crack cocaine epidemic in urban areas, involving inner-city youngsters in drug selling, is one dramatic example which has made more acute the need to develop high quality, deep reaching, long term, and holistic

intervention programs. Unless such efforts are made,

> [these youths] must continue to listen to the beat of a different drummer and to look for alternative activities and experiences to attempt to satisfy what they share with all young people--needs for growth and self-actualization, for affiliation, for respect from others, for social belonging, and basic to all of these, for a source of material sustenance (Brunswick, 1988: 184).

NOTES

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2. Initial interviews were completed with 399 youths; and 305 youths completed follow-up interviews. Since 8 youths

were incarcerated or housed in another secure facility during the entire follow-up period, they were excluded from the analyses we report.

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